

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, July 7. 1691.

The Questions of Love, and others proposed by Women, &c.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether the Papers lately publisht, entitled An Auction of young Ladies, &c. be not very disengenuous and ridiculous; and if so, what sort of Punishment ought to be inflicted on the Authors of such impertinent and reflective disingenuity?

Ans. We have received several Letters to this Effect, chiefly as we believe (and as some of the Letters suggest) because we have heretofore treated that Fair Sex with all the Tenderness and Candour we possibly could, and therefore it was supposed that in such a Critical Juncture our Pen could not be idle in their Defence—Could we ever be partial Advocates we have now the greatest Temptation, but we have no need of undue Methods, to vindicate those whose virtuous soft Tempers can even smile a Calumny into an Encomium.

But to the Question, we cannot but in Justice return our Answer in the Affirmative; and we may venture to make the Auctioneers themselves their own Judges upon this Dilemma; Either they had a particular Design to abuse such and such Ladies, or they had not—If the first, We have done, and shan't intrude upon the Magistrates Prerogative: If the last, the softest Construction we can make it bear, is, a Writing at random for any one that had a mind to apply it to themselves; and in this Case the Folly is but a little more charitable as 'tis more pardonable to fence with the Air and Distances, rather than to stigmatize particular Persons with indelible Sarcasms, such perhaps as only can be buried in the Abused's Grave: But if the worst Construction should be put o'th' Matter, there's but little Scandal in the Reflections of such Persons, who whilst they pretend to set a Value upon other Persons Fortunes and Qualities, do in the same Paper sell their own best Quality for one poor Penny. 'Tis a Teagueish sort of Witticism to dispose of what's another Bodies, without their consent. The strife of these three generous Auctioneers does a little resemble the Quarrels of the late Irish Regiments in Smithfield for such and such a House, when all the Right they had was founded in Air and Fancy. The difference lyes in this, that the Pen had the less courage of the two, which like some little sneaking Town-Beau that has stabb'd some body in the dark, sculks invisibly into a Corner. Is't not a pitiful Cowardice to Publish to all the World what we dare not own to a little part of it?—I thought none but Silvia's Bullying Satyrists could be stockt with such Abuses, but we find more o'th' breed, who no doubt to keep up their Title, will themselves bid like Buyers for Number 1, 3, & 4. (See the second Paper, entitled, A Continuation of a Catalogue of Ladies, &c.) fit Matches for such Authors, being known and recommended by themselves. This perhaps with the hot Services they have already met with by such Cattle (which 'tis suppos'd has made them rage thus) may be Punishment enough to reclaim them from further Auctioneering.

Quest. 2. What is Love?

Ans. 'Tis very much like Light—a thing that every Body knows, and yet none can tell what to make of it: 'Tis not Money, Fortune, Joynture, Raving, Stabbing, Hanging, Romancing, Flouncing, Swearing, Ramping, Desiring, Fighting, Dying,—though all those have been, are, and still will be mistaken and miscalled for it. What shall we say of it? 'Tis a pretty little soft thing that plays about the Heart—and those who have it will know it well enough by this Description. 'Tis extremely like a Sigh, and could we find a Painter could draw one, you'd easily mistake it for the other: 'Tis all over Eyes, so far as it from being blind, as some old Dotards have describ'd it, who certainly were Blind themselves: It has a Mouth

too, and a pair of pretty Hands, but yet the Hands speak, and you may feel at a distance every Word that comes from the Mouth, gently stealing through your very Soul—But we dare not make any further Enquiries, lest we should raise a Spirit too powerful for all our Art to lay again.

Quest. 3. Why love generally turns to coldness and neglect after Marriage?

Ans. Had the Question been proposed universally, as if it always had done so, we must have deny'd it, since we have in our knowledge, instances of some Persons who have their Flames and Raptures, and all that, as Hudibras calls it, as much after the Noosing, as before; and to say Truth, those who have so, are in so fine a Dream, that it were both a pity and a cruelty to wake 'em. But the Question is very cautiously and prudently put;—Why Love generally turns to coldness: In which sense 'tis undeniably true, and the Reasons thereof we shall attempt to give: One great cause we believe to be the Custom of the Age. We have seen some Kings Reigns, wherein it has been thought an abominable Scandal for a Man to Love his own Wife, whatever he might do by others. 'Twas esteem'd an argument of a low Spirit; and if things had gone on, as they were fairly going, the Cross-bar must have been chang'd from the Bastards Scutcheon to the Legitimates, and nothing would have been thought a greater disgrace, than to have been lawfully begotten, or born in Wedlock. Decency obliges us to forget whose Example it was, extremely contributed to this bad Custom; but we ought not easily to do so, as to those who took so much pains to bring us to it. The Invincible Monarch himself of France; nay, his Confessors and all, thought it not below them to be Pimps to England; their Nation supplied the Court, City and Country in the Devils Name with French Misses, Stallions, false Counts and Footmen, they resolving, if possible, to make us of the half-blood with themselves, that, as by the Transfusion of that of a Sheep or Calf into a Man, they might render us by degrees, more tame, and easie, and fitter to make Slaves and Footballs. This French Poison working into a great part of the Body of the Nation, as their Disease into that of a Man, is not easily to be got rid of, but will at least leave some ugly symptoms a long time after: And this we look upon to be one great Reason of this coldness and neglect, but too often observed after Marriage. But to be Ingenious, there seems yet something deeper in the case, and a larger Cause than this we have now assigned. Variety has, to say Truth, a strange charm in it, and must have, from a sort of necessity of Nature; because we find nothing which gives the Mind that satisfaction which it is made for, and which it will still vainly seek in sensible Objects, out of fondness to the Body to which it is so nearly joyn'd. Satiety commonly breeds Loathing, and even Manna every day would make one weary on it: But this variety may be obtained, this satiety may be cured, where there is at first a virtuous Love, grounded on Sympathy and Similitude, where there is besides Wit, and Discretion, all which have Charms that are almost infinite, and can never be exhausted. Discretion hides those Faults which are generally discovered after Marriage, or by degrees removes them; if not, Virtuous Love excuses, or at least ballances them; and Wit has always something entertaining and new, that's the Salt and Spirit which keeps the sweets of Matrimony from growing rapid, dull, and disagreeable. If 'tis very seldom all these Qualifications meet, 'tis no wonder that the first Order as seldom continues, but where these are, it cannot fail. Thus we have not only shown the Reasons of this coldness and neglect so very common after Marriage, but we hope too the manner how to avoid it.

Quest. 4. What are the best Remedies for Love, and what care is there for a desperate Lover?

Ans.

Ans. These were proposed singly, but being the same, or near akin, for we suppose none will desire Remedies for Love, but such as despair of attaining the beloved *Object*, we here intend to answer them together. *Ovid* has enough of them, but 'tis too tedious a work to transcribe him. He advises those who would love no longer, amongst other things, to endeavour to surprize such as they have lov'd, in their undress, which may be in some cases a very *effe*^{ct}*ual*, in others as *Dangerous* a Remedy. There's an unlucky Story in some of our old Writers, of a certain Monk, that was desperately in love with a Barbers Daughter, who lived near his Monastery, which proceeded even to *Dotage*, and though an Ingenious man, made him, as commonly happens, absolutely unfit for any business. His Abbot had a great kindness for him; and finding no Arguments could work upon him, and that no other way would cure him, very carefully and Fatherly order'd them both to be shut up together in a close room, and no Soul to come near them, only what Provisions they wanted to be put in at a small Wicket every day. The Monk for the first week thought himself in *Paradise*, the second 'twas pretty well, but the third he was in *Purgatory*, and the fourth in *Hell* it self, begging at the Wicket, of all Loves, that the Abbot would let him out again, though he were to live on nothing but *Bread and Water*. A pleasant Remedy enough, but such a one as our *desperate Lover* will hardly find practicable; we therefore advise him to a long *absence*, hard labour, work it out, for some say 'tis a lazy *Disease*. Or if this suit not with their Circumstances, let 'em affront the *Person* lov'd, and thereby get themselves more absolutely *scorn'd* and *hated*, and if that don't do the work, they almost deserve no other but a *Hempen Remedy*.

Quest. 5. Where is the likeliest place to get a Husband in?

Ans. Poor distressed Lady! had we but her Name, we should go near to insert an Advertisement for her at the end of our *Mercury*: But since she has left us in the dark, she must e'ne be content with the best directions we can give her in this *weighty matter*. We answer then, that 'tis the likeliest place to get a Lover where there are *fewest Women*; and accordingly, if she'll venture to ship her self for some of the Plantations by the next *Fluit*, if she's but any thing *marketable*, ten to one but one or other there will save her longing.

Quest. 6. Whether is absence or presence best for Love?

Ans. The latter in the beginning of an *Amour*, the former when 'tis confirm'd, and already settled. It is dangerous at first, because it gives a Rival opportunity to make *Addreses*, and 'tis somewhat in *Loving*, as 'tis in *Racing*, where if once a Horse gets the start, 'tis not so easily recovered: But where the main dispute is once over, and the *Heart* fairly won, the case is much alter'd, then perhaps being always present is one of the most dangerous, though *desired* things that can befall a *Lover*. As *Acquaintance* grows more intimate, our *Lovers* are still less upon their *Guards*, they don't shew their best side to one another as at first. Faults will daily be found, unluckily accidents will fall out, such things will be discover'd as wou'd never have been suspected nor believed, a thousand little Quarrels and piques will arise, which at least produce vexation, oftentimes a final parting: But now in absence the quite contrary happens; we willingly forget the Faults of those we love, and magnifie their *Excellencies*; we embrace and cherish their dear *Ideas* and *Memories*; we are daily expecting and wishing to see and hear from them, and if we hear, especially by *Letters*, our Love is extremely encreased by those little subtle Messengers: There's all the *Soul* and more to be seen in them. We say therein whatever we please, without being put to the trouble of a suitable *Repartee*, or pumping for a kind and yet discreet Answer: All our Thoughts are there dress'd at the best advantage, and we may give them just what turn we please. The Man may write with as much Passion as he will, he may set his *adorable* before him, dress'd in as many Beauties as his *Fancy* can form, without having the *Original* by to confute him, and write according to the new form'd excellency of his *Ideal Mistress*, and bring in e'ne all the fine things he thinks of. The Lady may with all the Caution she pleases answer him agen, and let as much Love as she will look out through her *Prudence*; make what Pro-

mises she pleases, yet with such *restrictions* and *modifications*, as shall bind her no more than one of the King of *France's* Treaties, or *Edicts*:—And when they come, once to meet agen, there's such ado with *Transports*, *Raptures*, and the rest, that in a word, we dare think no longer on't.

Quest. 7. A Mother and Mistress being at the same time in equal danger, which is a man oblig'd to save?

Ans. 'Tis very seldom that Providence brings a Man under so severe a Temptation; but when it does, whichever he should save, 'tis easie to guess which he would, namely, his *Mistress*, since the Bonds of *Inclination* are stronger than those of *Duty*, though here, especially if a *Contract*, are both. A Woman would and ought to save a Husband rather than a Child in the same Circumstances though the Love runs stronger downwards than upwards, and so it should seem from parity of Reason, a Mistress in the forementioned Circumstances would be prefer'd to a Mother, though we esteem it more generous, were it possible, to dye himself than lose either.

Quest. 8. Whether a true Lover will offer any Injury to the Person he loves?

Ans. We suppose the Injury is to be understood as relating to her Honour, and we Answer it in the Negative, grounding our Opinion on this demonstrative Reason—*Respect* is of the very *Essence* of true Love, wherever then that *Respect* ceases, as it does with a vengeance where Honour is attempted, the Love must necessarily cease together with it, and by that very offer the Pretender changes the handsome Name of a Lover into one much more frightful and horrid, or at least we should think it so to any Lady, who but makes the least pretences to *Virtue*.

Quest. 11. What's the Reason when Women prove bad, they are commonly worse than Men?

Ans. The Rarity of Examples make them more remarkable: As for instance, a Cut Finger is supposed to be hit oftner than any other, because the other being well, no notice is taken when they are hit: So that I am willing to conclude the Querist in a wrong Supposition; but if it be a Truth, perhaps the Imperfection of a Womans Nature may soonest yield to a total Cancellation of the Obligations of Humanity and Natural Religion.

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